

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HORS use only

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic McComas Institute

and or common

## 2. Location

street & number South side of Singer Road, east of Mountain Road (Md. Rte not for publication 152)

city, town Joppa \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district First

state Maryland code 24 county Harford code 025

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name CONTACT: Ms. Sarah V. Robinson owner: Mt. Zion Methodist Church

street & number 1614 Hollingsworth Road Singer Road

city, town Joppa \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Maryland 21085

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Harford County Courthouse

street & number 40 South Main Street

city, town Bel Air \_\_\_\_\_ state Maryland

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title \_\_\_\_\_ has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

date \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☐ good  
☒ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☒ unaltered  
☐ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This one-story frame structure with a gable roof is located on the south side of Singer Road, approximately 1/3 of a mile west of the intersection with Mountain Road (Md. Rte. 152). Five bays long and three bays wide, this former schoolhouse on a raised stone foundation faces north and has a bell cot over the north gable. Windows have 6/6 sash and vertical board shutters with strap hinges.

The entrance is in the center bay of the north side, flanked by one window on each side. The double-leaf door with a five-light transom has three molded panels in each door, of which the top panel is arched. In the gable is a louvered arched opening framed by a sign bearing the name "McComas Institute" and the date "1867."

Both sides have windows in each of the five bays.

The south end has an entrance in the west bay, flanked on the east by two windows.

The interior consisting of two rooms and a partitioned storage area in the northwest corner is essentially intact. The south room is the larger of the two and has a central stove and chimney, a wooden board ceiling and plasterboard walls with blackboards. The north room has a stove in the center of the west wall, a wooden board ceiling and walls of narrow horizontal boards. Door and window trim is plain.

### ACREAGE JUSTIFICATION:

The one-acre lot around the school is the same one that was first deeded to the school's trustees in 1867.

# C. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1867

Builder Architect

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The McComas Institute stands as the single most important landmark in the history of Black education in Harford County, Maryland. Constructed in 1867, this building is one of three schools erected in the area for the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (also known as the Freedmen's Bureau) after the Civil War. McComas Institute is the only one, however, to remain intact. The other two schools were Berkeley (Hosanna), near Darlington, which has been drastically remodeled, and Green-spring (Hopewell) at Webster, which was burned in 1926 (reputedly by the Klu Klux Klan).

## HISTORY

In 1860, Harford County had 4800 black inhabitants and 1800 slaves. Before the Civil War, sporadic private enterprises were responsible for their education--at least one school has been documented as having been started by a free negro, who hired a teacher from Baltimore and later local relatives. Otherwise, classes were sometimes arranged by good-willed slave owners for their slaves and slaves' children.

It wasn't until after the Civil War that schools for Negroes obtained any public support in Harford County.

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands was established on November 9, 1864, under General Orders #112 of Major General Lewis Wallace. Its purpose was to serve the needs of people dislocated by the Civil War, providing them with food, clothing, fuel, medical care and education. Although Maryland was not one of the military districts established to administer rebel states, the Bureau was in operation here; and one of its primary concerns was education. It gave direct aid to establish the first school system for negroes in Maryland, providing materials, equipment and money for construction, rental and repair of school houses. It also provided protection and transportation for teachers, who were supplied by civic and religious organizations.

The McComas Institute was built on land belonging to George and Mary Ann Johnson, described as "colored" in one deed. On September 10, 1867, the Johnsons sold one acre to Charles Waters, Abraham Waters, Peter Bishop, Joseph Henry, and John H. Butler for \$30 "in trust for the purpose of erecting or allowing to be erected thereon a schoolhouse for the use, benefit and Education of the Colored People of Harford County."<sup>1</sup>

The Bureau was abolished in 1872 and the Harford County Board of Education took over the support of Freedmen's schools. The Board had a system whereby another group, often a church, held title to and used the school buildings, and the Board of Education would help with repairs.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

28-507  
FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

McComas Institute  
Harford County

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE 1

(SIGNIFICANCE, continued)

a 1918 Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners shows that the County owned 10 "colored schools," rented one, and was loaned five making a total of 16 schools that year, with 24 colored teachers and 956 colored students. For the McComas Institute, in 1918 the Board spent a total of \$333.07: 294.03 for salaries, \$1.56 for textbooks, \$.18 for materials, \$95 for janitor's supplies, and \$36.35 for fuel. A 1928 Annual Report shows a total of eight boys and ten girls at the McComas Institute (known as the Mountain School at that time) ranging from first through seventh grades. McComas Institute was officially closed in 1939, although other reports state that the building was no longer being used as a school by 1935.

Since there are no subsequent deed transactions involving the McComas Institute, and since the Board of Education's records show payment of \$20 rent annually for use of the building, it is probable that the Board of Trustees continued to own the building until it was taken over by the neighboring Mt. Zion Methodist Church.

The McComas Institute building is currently being used for community dinners by the Mt. Zion Methodist Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Liber WHD 19, Folio 267

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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McComas Institute  
Harford County

CONTINUATION SHEET Maryland

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Andrews, Mabel E. "Education of the Negro in Harford County," unpublished manuscript (1970).

Harford County Board of Education records of McComas School (1904-1939).

Harford County Directory (1953).

Low, W. A. "The Freedmen's Bureau and Education in Maryland," Maryland Historical Magazine, Vol. XLI (1946), 154-156, Vol. XLVII (1952), 29-39.

"The Freedmen's Bureau and Civil Rights in Maryland," Journal of Negro History, Vol. XXXVII, No. 3 (July, 1952).

Wright, C. Milton. "Historical Story of Harford County Maryland Educational System," No. 7 in a series of newspaper articles (January, 1950).

Wright, C. Milton. Our Harford Heritage (1967).

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #2.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1 acre

Quadrangle name Edgewood Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning in the center of Singer Road, running southerly 161 feet bounding on the west end of the lot belonging to the Mt. Zion Church (Liber WSF 91, Folio 121); thence westerly 227 feet to a point; thence northerly 227 feet to the center of Singer Road; thence easterly in the center of Singer Road 233 feet to the beginning

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan M. Deeney, Field Historian/Natalie Shivers, Historic Sites Surveyor

organization Historic District Commission

date 1/77 - 9/79

street & number 45 South Main Street

telephone 838-6000 X207

city or town Bel Air

state Maryland

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

     national      state      local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

*Easement*  
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

1303074508  
HA-307

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC McComas Institute

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Singer Road

CITY, TOWN Joppa

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
1st

STATE Maryland

COUNTY  
Harford County

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

\_\_\_ DISTRICT  
☒ BUILDING(S)  
\_\_\_ STRUCTURE  
\_\_\_ SITE  
\_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

\_\_\_ PUBLIC  
☒ PRIVATE  
\_\_\_ BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

\_\_\_ IN PROCESS  
\_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

☒ OCCUPIED  
\_\_\_ UNOCCUPIED  
\_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

☒ YES: RESTRICTED  
\_\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED  
\_\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_\_ AGRICULTURE  
\_\_\_ COMMERCIAL  
\_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL  
\_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT  
\_\_\_ GOVERNMENT  
\_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL  
\_\_\_ MILITARY  
\_\_\_ MUSEUM  
\_\_\_ PARK  
\_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
☒ RELIGIOUS  
\_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC  
\_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION  
\_\_\_ OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Mt. Zion Methodist Church

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER  
Singer Road

CITY, TOWN  
Joppa

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code  
MD 21085

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Harford County Courthouse

Liber #: 91  
Folio #: 121

STREET & NUMBER  
40 South Main Street

CITY, TOWN  
Bel Air

STATE  
Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

**DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

This large, frame school house is one story high and is built onto rubble stone foundations. The building faces north and is three bays wide. The principle entrance is located in the center of the northern facade. This consists of two moulded panel doors. A five light transom is above these doors. The center entrance is flanked by two shuttered windows. The shutters are generally closed and are attached by iron strap hinges. Directly above the door is a louvered lunette encircled by the legend "McComas Institute, 1867.

The roof is gable front with wide plain eaves. A louvered belfry or cupola is at the north peak. Five shuttered windows are on the east facade while a shed addition has been attached to the west. A brick chimney is located at the center of the west side. The south facade also has a center door flanked by two shuttered windows.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES	BUILDER/ARCHITECT
----------------	-------------------

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The McComas Institue was the third school built by the Freedman's Bureau. This Bureau was established on March 3, 1865 by Act of Congress. Its principal aim was the education of Negroes, and funds were provided to build school houses and pay salaries of teachers. The Bureau was in operation from 1865-1870 and spent millions of dollars for this purpose.

The McComas Institute had a self perpetuating Board of Trustees and was added to from time to time by selection of men from the adjoining church and community. The Board of Education, having no direct title to the property, abandoned the building to the exclusive use of the church and community when the school was closed in 1935.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Harford County Directory, 1953.

Wright, C. Milton; Our Harford Heritage; 1967.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY lot 380/290x165

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This lot is bounded by Singer Road to the north; A public road to the west; and a lane on the east.

### LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Susan M. Deeney, Field Historian

January 19, 1977

ORGANIZATION

Historic District Commission

DATE

838-6000 ext. 207

STREET & NUMBER

45 South Main Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438





McComas Institute  
Joppa, Maryland 21085  
Natalie Shivers  
June, 1979  
Northeast

HA-307



McComas Institute  
Joppa, Maryland 21085  
Natalie Shivers  
June, 1979  
Southwest .

HA-307



HA 387

Mc Comas Institute J8E Apr-20